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SUBJECT: EU'S ROBERT COOPER AND S/P SLAUGHTER DISCUSS MIDDLE EAST, AFGHANISTAN, AND IRAN

Classified By: USEU POL M-C Chris Davis for reasons 1.4 (b. and d.)

1.(C) SUMMARY: On the margin of the U.S.-EU Ministerial Troika March 6, S/P Anne-Marie Slaughter met with EU Council Secretariat DG Robert Cooper, who asked that the USG "raise the temperature" on Israeli settlements, and help enhance movement and access for Palestinians. Noting some divergence with respect to the fate of PM Salam Fayyad and dealing with moderate members of Hamas, Dr. Slaughter urged the EU and the U.S. to get on the same page regarding the formation of a Palestinian unity government. Cooper argued that solving Cyprus could remove impasses to NATO sharing information with EUPOL in Afghanistan and to the U.S. participating in EUSR-Bosnia, heretofore blocked by Turkey-Cyprus disputes. Cooper was wary about the prospects of success in Afghanistan, and said the European public was against involvement there. Cooper encouraged U.S.-Iranian consultations on Afghanistan. On Iran's nuclear program, Cooper said the best we could hope for was a freeze and transparency. Mr. Cooper was accompanied by John Gatt-Rutter of the Council Secretariat's Middle East Task Force, and Dr. Slaughter by USEU Pol M-C. Dr. Slaughter's meeting with the Head of the Policy Unit at the Secretariat, Helga Schmid, is reported septel. End Summary

The Middle East: Trade is the Thing

12. (C) Opening their discussion with the Middle East, both Dr. Slaughter and Mr. Cooper noted that Secretary Clinton and High Representative Solana had been deeply affected by their recent visits to Ramallah and Gaza, respectively. Cooper pressed the point that Palestinians now need access more than anything. By obstructing access, he said, Israeli authorities were flouting the agreement on Palestinian movement and access negotiated by the U.S. Access means trade, Cooper continued, which is the key to Palestinian recovery, not "throwing money" at the problem. Dr. Slaughter noted that an Israel-Palestine-Jordan free trade agreement, on the model of the Benelux countries, was worth reconsidering, citing the writing of Gidon Gottlieb on this subject. She added that the EU could nurture such a "Benelux" approach through its Euro-Mediterranean Union, and the U.S. could provide security. Israel might be prompted to consider the idea, she said, by the worsening global economic crisis.

Stop Settlements

13. (C) Robert Cooper expressed satisfaction upon hearing that the Secretary was upset about the Israeli order to demolish some Palestinian apartment buildings in East Jerusalem issued earlier that same week. Cooper said he hoped the Secretary would remain "fighting mad" about that.

Shifting to a discussion about Israeli settlements, Cooper said they were "at the heart" of the Israeli-Palestinian problem. Since Oslo, he continued, there has been one settlement after the other. Cooper speculated that if the USG was willing to raise the temperature on settlements, the EU could institute something such as a "no-settlements" content rule in trade with Israel. Dr. Slaughter said the USG was waiting for the formation of a new Israeli government before pronouncing on settlements.

Unity Government, but what about Fayyad?

¶4. (C) Dr. Slaughter asked that the EU insist on keeping Salam Fayyad as PA prime minister, saying that the USG supported Palestinian reconciliation, but not to the point where Fayyad is obliged to leave. Gatt-Rutter suggested that Fayyad could be excellent as a finance minister and could better monitor the money pledged for the Palestinians. Noting that Fayyad was the exemplar of a government of technocrats, Cooper thought that Fayyad could be an effective eminence grise to the Palestinian Authority. Both Cooper and Gatt-Rutter contended that Hamas included a broad spectrum of people, some educated and "reasonable," and that Mahmoud Abbas was coming around to the idea of sharing power with moderates in Hamas. Dr. Slaughter stated that the U.S. and EU needed to get on the same page on this question, acknowledging that Abbas as much as suggested that too much visible support from us might weaken him. Cooper said that High Representative Javier Solana "lives the Middle East and is relentlessly optimistic a

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bout it," and encouraged the Secretary to talk to him often about it.

The Broader Middle East: Cyprus

¶5. (C) Both Cooper and Slaughter agreed that solving the Cyprus problem could have a positive ripple effect for other seemingly intractable problems in the Middle East. Cooper said this is the year to fix it, particularly since the Greek and Turkish Cypriot leaders, Christofias and Talat, can apparently work together. The Greek Cypriots should understand, said Cooper, that property resettlements would cost them nothing.

¶6. (C) As examples of the detrimental effects of the Cyprus vs. Turkey dynamic, Cooper said that Turkey blocks NATO from sharing intelligence with the EU in Afghanistan, "which could end up costing us lives lost." Cyprus, for its part, wants to stop the EU from inviting the U.S. to take part in a large EU Special Representative mission to Bosnia (once the Office of the High Representative closes, which Cooper said he thought was inevitable). The Cypriots, he said, see the U.S. as a Trojan horse for Turkey's own involvement in the EUSR mission. Cooper complained of bad faith on the part of both Turkey and Cyprus: the Ankara Protocol allowing Cypriot ships into Turkish ports, he said, has not been implemented; the Greek Cypriots acted in bad faith regarding the Annan Plan (and, by extension, the premise of their own accession to the EU).

Afghanistan and Pakistan: The Truth

¶7. (C) Speaking candidly about Afghanistan, Robert Cooper told Dr. Slaughter that "the truth" was that the war was very unpopular in Europe. While he lauded Defense Secretary Gates, Cooper was still troubled by lingering parallels with the Soviets' failed adventure in Afghanistan and the U.S. war in Vietnam. Cooper punctuated his discussion with remarks

such as, "Why are we there?" "Everything we do is always wrong there," and "9-11 was organized in Pakistan, not Afghanistan." The Western effort in Afghanistan lacks legitimacy in the eyes of the Afghan people, Cooper continued. "Look at France during World War Two," he remarked. "More than 70,000 French were killed by Allied action there, yet the French, who wanted an Allied victory, kept quiet about that." Cooper contrasted that attitude with President Karzai's public criticisms about civilian casualties in Afghanistan. While Cooper acknowledged that Karzai got rid of (the corrupt) justice and interior ministers, he judged that the Afghan electorate would vote for what it perceived the U.S. wanted; so why not support a candidate other than Karzai?

¶8. (C) S/P Slaughter responded that the Afghan National Army is doing better, but we still needed an integrated NATO strategy, to include a civilian surge. Civilian mentors can report corruption right away, she said. Dr. Slaughter said she thought the U.S. public would not support rebuilding Afghanistan as a goal in itself, and we therefore needed a realistic framework for our strategy. She said she expected Robert Cooper to be encouraged by how we frame our objectives in the Afghanistan/Pakistan policy review. On the long term in Afghanistan and Pakistan, Cooper said he would try to introduce Dr. Slaughter to English professor Geoff Mulgan, who argues that governments overestimate what they can change in the short term, and underestimate their long-term impact.

¶9. (C) Slaughter and Cooper agreed on the importance of Pakistan, Dr. Slaughter saying she thought the recent attack against the cricketers in Lahore would help turn the tide of Pakistani public opinion against such extremism. Taking a lesson from the Irish Republic Army, Cooper cautioned that the loss of legitimacy for extremists may only come "at the end of a long, long process."

Iran: Transparent Freeze

¶10. (C) Robert Cooper said he thought there was little chance stopping Iran from going nuclear, if that is really what Iran wanted. He quipped that the favorite Iranian pastime, however, is not making decisions. The best we can do, Cooper said, is to "freeze things as they are," and get maximum transparency. He said he was happy to hear of the

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idea of having the USG and Tehran attend the same conference on Afghanistan. He noted that a visiting Iranian diplomat had lamented to interlocutors at the Council in Brussels on March 5 the lack of consultations with Iran on Afghanistan. While sanguine about the prospect of new USG approaches to Iran, Dr. Slaughter warned that could not lose sight of Israel's redlines with respect to Iran's nuclear program.

¶11. (U) This cable has been cleared by Dr. Slaughter.

MURRAY

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